

Message Text

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ACTION COME-00

INFO OCT-01 AF-04 ISO-00 EB-07 RSC-01 DOTE-00 H-01 /014 W

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R 191020Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7275

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FOR COMMERCE/MEPD/JAY SMITH

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BEXP, ELTN, OEXC, NI

SUBJ: PROPOSED VISIT BY NIGERIAN RAILWAY CORPORATION'S
GENERAL MANAGER TO U.S.

1. ACTING GENERAL MANAGER OF NRC, THEOPHILUS I.O. NZEGWU,
HAS FOR SOME TIME LET IT BE KNOWN HE WOULD WELCOME
INVITATION TO VISIT U.S. ON TOUR OF RAIL FACILITIES.

2. IN 1970, OFFICIAL USG INVITATION WAS EXTENDED BY THEN
AMBASSADOR TRUEHEART UNDER AUSPICES OF STATE'S "LEADERSHIP
GRANT" PROGRAM, BUT WAS TURNED DOWN BY NIGERIAN MINISTRY OF
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS. EMBASSY'S UNDERSTANDING IS THAT NZEGWU'S
RANK PLACES HIM ON LIST OF TOP GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WHO ARE
PROHIBITED FROM ACCEPTING OFFICIAL INVITATIONS TO VISIT
FOREIGN COUNTRIES. FOR THAT REASON, WE WOULD LIKE TO
PURSUE POSSIBILITY OF SOLICITING INVITATION FROM PRIVATE
SOURCE IN U.S. AND WOULD APPRECIATE HELP FROM COMMERCE/MEPD
IN MAKING PRELIMINARY PROBES IN THIS DIRECTION.

3. IDEALLY, INVITATION MIGHT BE MADE IN NAME OF PRIVATE
RAILWAY ASSOCIATION, SUCH AS AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF RAIL-
ROADS OR ANY OTHER APPROPRIATELY NEUTRAL GROUP. IT SEEMS
LIKELY HOWEVER THAT PRIVATE COMPANIES SUCH AS PULLMAN,
GENERAL ELECTRIC, AND OTHERS WOULD BE WILLING TO PICK UP
MAJOR PORTION OF EXPENSES. WHAT WE HAVE IN MIND IS TOUR
OF ABOUT 2-3 WEEKS' DURATION TO MAJOR PUBLIC RAIL FACILITIES

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AS WELL AS PRIVATE MANUFACTURERS, TO TAKE PLACE SOMETIME

BETWEEN MAY AND JULY OF 1975. NZEGWU NOT FREE TO TRAVEL
UNTIL AFTER MAY 1.

4. WOULD ALSO BE APPROPRIATE, IF POSSIBLE, TO INAUGURATE
VISIT WITH SOCIAL FUNCTION IN WASHINGTON, D.C., HOSTED BY
COMMERCE OR TRANSPORTATION OFFICIAL OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY
RANK, AND ATTENDED PERHAPS BY ONE OR TWO CONGRESSMEN WITH
INTERESTS IN THIS FIELD.

5. MAY-JUNE TIMING WOULD DOVETAIL WELL WITH USDOC-SPONSORED
RAILWAY EQUIPMENT TRADE MISSION SCHEDULED FOR APRIL 6-13,
1975, ALLOWING PARTICIPANTS VALUABLE MEANS FOR FOLLOW-UP
PRESENTATIONS. WOULD ALSO SERVE TO EXPOSE NZEGWU TO U.S.
CAPABILITIES, SUBSEQUENT (PROBABLY) TO NRC'S APPOINTMENT
OF GENERAL CONSULTANT FOR RAILWAYS, BUT PRIOR TO AWARD OF
MAJOR EQUIPMENT AND CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS PLANNED FOR
COMING YEARS.

6. NZEGWU, ALTHOUGH NOMINALLY SUBORDINATE TO NRC CHAIRMAN
IBRAHIM DASUKI, IS GENERALLY RECOGNIZED AS DRIVING FORCE
BEHIND NRC, AND, AS ENGINEER BY TRAINING, MOST KNOWLEDGEABLE
RAILROAD MAN IN NIGERIA. THAT HE HAS, IN PAST FEW YEARS,
RECEIVED INVITATIONS TO VISIT JAPAN, UK, FRANCE AND ITALY,
IS INDICATION OF IMPORTANCE OTHER COUNTRIES PLACE ON HIS
GOODWILL.

7. EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE READING ON GENERAL RECEPTIVITY
TO THIS IDEA ON PART OF PROPOSED HOST AND PRIVATE MANU-
FACTURERS. IF READING IS POSITIVE, WE PROPOSE TO APPROACH
NZEGWU WITH GENERAL OUTLINES OF PLANS AND WORK OUT DETAILS
FROM THERE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 DEC 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: elyme
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974LAGOS11589
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740369-0393
From: LAGOS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741223/aaaaatfk.tel
Line Count: 93
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION COME
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: elyme
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 SEP 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <03 SEP 2002 by WorrelSW>; APPROVED <18 MAR 2003 by elyme>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PROPOSED VISIT BY NIGERIAN RAILWAY CORPORATION'S GENERAL MANAGER TO U.S.
TAGS: BEXP, OEXC, NI
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005